DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 786 PS 019 291

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TITLE Labour Market and Non-Labour Market Work: The Social Construction of Motherhood.
PUB DATE Jun 90
NOTE 46p.; Paper presented at the Feminism and Legal Theory Conference (5th, Madison, WI, June 18-22, 1990).
PUB TYPE Historical Materials (060) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Child Rearing; Day Care; Early Childhood Education; Educational Needs; *Employed Women; Foreign Countries; Labor Force; *Labor Market; Mothers; *Parent Role; *Public Policy; *Sex Bias; Social Attitudes; Traditionalism; World War II
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Feminist Criticism; *Labor Force Segmentation; Labor Studies; Population Policies; Pronatalism

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between Australian women's participation in paid work in the public market and the child-rearing component of their unpaid, non-market work, and the role of public policy in regulating the relationship. The study presents a historical overview of the period between 1939 and 1950. Critical concepts and the ideas of several feminist thinkers are discussed. Work-related issues of the war years are considered. These include: (1) the distinction between public and private work; (2) the entry of women into the work force from 1939 to 1943; (3) social attitudes towards working women who are unmarried and those who are married; (4) the increased need for child care; (5) the opposition of church hierarchies to working women; and (6) government child care programs. The issues of postwar reconstruction include the decline of women in the work force from 1943 to 1947 and the increase of working women after this period; ideological attempts to encourage a return to traditional family and women's roles; pronatalism and government population policies; and child care. A list of references is provided. (BC)

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Fifth Feminism and Legal Theory Conference,

University of Wisconsin, June 18-22, 1990

Labour Market and Non-Labour Market Work: The Social Construction of Motherhood

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Introduction

The Problem

My interest in the nature of the relationship between the work which women do in the public, waged are of the market and their work in the private, non-waged domestic sphere was shaped by the facts of my own biography, and its location within a particular social structure in particular historical circumstances. These not only gave me immediate experience of the relationship, but in addition provided me with the means and opportunity for reflection upon its nature and significance. In the process of such reflection it became apparent that, on the whole, the producers of scholarly discourse have <u>not</u> split their intellectual work from their personal lives, although the fusion of the two has been in the main unconscious and unrecognised. As a result, the experiences and perspectives of a predominantly male intellectual community have been reflected in its work. Perhaps this is nowhere more apparent than in the intellectual tendency to treat "work" and "the family" as separate areas of study. The tendency is not confined to any one discipline (nor, of course, is it confined to academia). Economists have characterised "leisure" as the alternative to "work" (meaning market work), overlooking women for whom the alternative to market work is likely to be non-market work. Sociologists and historians have treated the family as a focus of emotions and a site of leisure, in so doing obscuring its significance as a place of work.

More recently, feminist writers conscious of the connections between theory and personal life have pointed to the gaps in academic conceptualisations of "work". A good deal of feminist writing has been addressed to a reconceptualisation of the nature of work, in particular the relationship between women's market and non-market work

and the role of the state in regulating this relationship.

Much of the discussion of women's non-market work, including the writings of feminist scholars, has tended to treat it as an undifferentiated category - as "housework" or "domestic labour". The debate over the political economy of housework (important because it placed the family in the mainstream of economic analysis), while introducing a further differentiation between the reproduction of labour from day to day (essentially the servicing of the adult male wage labourer) and from generation to generation (the physical maintenance and socialisation of children), in effect treated domestic labour as an undifferentiated category. It made no attempt to tease out the relative significance of the two aspects of reproduction. Curthoys (1975) makes a similar point in her critique of Kingston's pioneering history of women's labour in Australia, My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary-Ann:

> ...she suggests that in the 1930's or thereabouts labour saving devices did not free women for full entry into the life of the society because of 'all the mythology and shibboleths about a woman's power and a woman's place'. This is only a partial answer; an allied and more fundamental one is that labour saving devices do not mind children; while technology reduced the burden of heavy household labour, it did not alter the isolated character of childcare.
>
> (Curthoys, 1975:89)

A decomposition of women's non-market work into its constituent elements is crucial to any understanding of the relationship between women's market and non-market work. I have chosen to focus on the child-care component of women's non-market work as its most intractable aspect, as that element which is (ideologically and materially) most difficult to combine with market work. I would not argue, as Firestone (1979) has done, that child-rearing is oppressive as such. Rather, I suggest that it plays a pivotal role in the oppression of women because of the particular character of its

organisation and because of the organisation of market work to dovetail with a particular family formation. The difficulty of combining child care with market work has been compounded by a failure at the level of public policy to provide alternative forms of child care.

Thus, in the study under discussion I have chosen to examine the relationship between Australian women's participation in market work, and the child-rearing component of their non-market work, with particular reference to the role of public policy in regulating the relationship between the two. I have selected for study the period between 1939 and 1950, covering the years of World War II and the post-war reconstruction. Feminist writers in a number of countries have drawn attention to this period as possessing particular significance with respect to several themes, among them women's workforce participation and the related issues of women's pay and conditions and the sexual segmentation of the workforce; the development of the welfare state and its reinforcement of the sexual division of labour in market and non-market work; and the transformation of cultural definitions of femininity. More orthodox studies of the period have scarcely mentioned women other than as members of the armed services or as munitions workers, with a tacit acknowledgement that they "kept the home fires burning". The conditions in which either kind of work was done, and the relationship between the two generally appear to have evoked little curiosity.

I was greatly encouraged in this endeavour by the publication in 1983 of Denise Riley's book, War in the Nursery, a highly original study of the relationship between psychology and social policy focusing on child care policies in Great Britain during and after World War II. In particular, Riley's work confirmed me in my thinking that widely held feminist beliefs, unsupported by detailed and

critical investigation, while focusing on new questions and relationships had obscured as well as clarified their objectives:

> ...we can trace two widely held beliefs about postwar Britain's policies for the care of children and for women's employment. One of these attributes to Bowlby's work the blame for the vanishing of those nurseries established for the children of working mothers during the war. The second makes a broader claim about the service of psychology, throughout the late 1940's and the 1950's, to a government given to promoting an 'idealogy of domesticity' for its own ends. These beliefs - whose origins are by no means 'irrational' - claim the allegiance of much socialist and feminist reflection: but they do much to obfuscate the history of the period, and reinforce misapprehension of the broader theoretical relations.
>
> (Riley, 1983:110)

Ways of Understanding the Problem

Marxist and feminist writers attempting to analyse the particular nature of women's relationship to market work have frequently conceptualised woman as a 'reserve army of labour', emphasising the disposability of women's labour as functional to capital in its strategies to maximise profitability. In an early article on theories of women's work, Beechey (1978) raised the question of whether women drawn into market work from the family constituted a specific form of reserve army which was different from the forms described by Marx (latent, floating, and stagnant). Beechey concluded that, while women could occupy any of Marx's categories, married women also occupied a position in the reserve army of labour which derived specifically from the sexual division of labour within the family.

Various writers have questioned the usefulness of the reserve army concept in explaining the relationship of women to market work. In particular, any form of the thesis which argues that women are at all times the first to be expelled from the labour market during crises has been rejected as incongruent with the facts of a sexually segmented labour market (Power, 1980; Baldock, 1983).[1] Johnson (1986)

has also suggested that the thesis conflates women's wage labour with the needs of capital, and does not explain why women specifically form this labour reserve.

In a more recent article, Beechey (1983) seems no longer to find any particular usefulness in the reserve army thesis. She does, however, retain her earlier emphasis on the connections between the sexual division of labour in the labour market and in the family. The conditions under which women sell their labour power are, she argues, different from the conditions.under which men sell theirs. In analysing these conditions it is important to distinguish between the role of familial ideology (that a woman's primary responsibilities are those of housewife and mother) and the concrete constraints imposed by caring for children and other dependents. The distinction between the family as an ideological construct and as a social and economic institution is also made by Barrett and Macintosh (1982) , who argue that it is this two-fold character which makes 'the family' peculiarly difficult to analyse.

At the heart of much of the work on the relationship between women's market and non-market work has been a debate over the degree to which women's oppression is constructed independently of the general relations of capitalist production.

Baldock (1983:20) has suggested that the specific history of interrelations of capitalism and patriarchy has given rise to a series of conceptual distinctions - between public and private spheres, work and home, productive and non-productive labour, and paid and unpaid work - and that state policies are constructed on the basis of these distinctions.

The influence of the public/private distinction can be seen in the work of Christopher Lasch (1977), who argues that the concept of the family as a haven in a heartless world which reached its zenith in

the bourgeois family of the nineteenth century took for granted a radical separation between work and leisure and between public and private life.

Barker and Allen (1976) have commented on the same dichotomy, drawing parallels with the gemeinschaft/gesellschaft distinction at the core of so much nineteenth and early twentieth century sociology. Unlike Lasch, however, they view the private/public dichotomy as an ideological construct which directs attention away from the differential distribution of power within families by emphasising affective ties and consensual relations. Since 'work' and 'home' are contrasted in this dichotomy, housework is typified as non-work. The division between home and work, as we have already noted, is reflected in the traditions of academic sociology. Carole Pateman has commented on the significance of the connection between the sexual division of labour and the separation of public spheres for the manner in which social science has been conducted:

> The social, the public world, gains its meaning from what is excluded from it, from that with which it is contrasted and to which it is opposed.
> ... what has gone unnoticed until recently is that understanding the social in this way, and, hence also our understanding of the object of study in social science, excludes women, and the activities and sphere seen as naturally theirs, from the scope of scientific enquiry.
> ... The eyes of social scientists are so firmly fixed on the public world that its division from, yet integral relation to, the private domestic sphere is 'forgotten'.
>
> (Goodnow and Pateman, 1985:x-xi)

Feminist writers have drawn attention to the importance of this 'forgotten' relationship. The private sphere is not free from the influence and interventions of public policy: the structure of the public sphere is premised on the division of labour in the private sphere. They have, however, emphasised the importance of treating the private/public distinction as a social construct, an object of study,

not as a conceptual tool of analysis.

Feminist scholars, then, have opened up new areas as legitimate objects of study, forged connections between areas of study previously separated by academic disciplines, and developed new conceptual apparatuses which have cast a different light on 'old' problems.

Conceptualising the Nature of the State

The liberal pluralist concept of the state as a neutral arbiter reconciling conflicting interests seems less satisfactory than a view of the state as managing the systems of domination which characterise the social formation, or as a 'complex of relationships, embodying a certain form of power operating through various institutional arrangements' (Burton, 1985:104-105). Theories of the state have focused on class relations, with few attempts at explanations incorporating institutionalised gender relations, although, as Connell (1987:125-6) points out, it can hardly be denied that the state is deeply implicated in the social relations of gender. Marxist writers on the state have confined their analysis to class relations of domination. Marxist feminists have also tended to view the state in class terms. While recognising its part in maintaining men's domination over women, they have had difficulty in explaining why this domination is essential for capitalist production. Marxist writers have, however, made the important point that the state requires a degree of autonomy from the dominant class(es) in order adequately to represent their interests.

Even a superficial consideration of the relevance of theories of the state to patriarchal domination points to a surprising theoretical gap. On the one hand, Marxist theories of the state have interpreted it in terms of economic and political domination with reference to a particular mode of production, capitalism. The sexual

division of labour has been treated (if at all) as of secondary significance, in the main being confined to discussions of the welfare state. Patriarchy has not been considered as a central feature of social organisation, as a system of domination (or an integral aspect of a complex system of domination) managed by the state.

On the other hand, as MacKinnon (1983:635,643) has observed, feminism has no theory of the state, only a theory of the power.

Within feminist theory a concentration on the welfare aspects of the state has resulted in a number of excellent studies of specific areas of state policy, but as Burton (1985:105) points out this concentration has been

> at the expense of understanding, in historical terms, how the state, through juridical and other arrangements, continued to define women, and contributed to the definitions of masculinity and femininity in ways not immediately obvious.

What is needed is a more inclusive theory of the state which recognises the historically interconnected nature of class and gender relations without privileging either as explanatory concepts. Such a theory should also recognise that

> Power in the state is strategic because there is more at issue than a simple distribution of benefits. The state has a constitutive role in forming and re-forming social patterns.
>
> (Connell, 1987:130)

The Present Study

There are many possible points of entry into the research problem as described. The sources from which I have drawn are mainly government and organisational archives and newspaper records, supplemented by various contempory published works and a small amount of interview material. The study focuses on the way in which women's market and non-market work (in particular, child care), and the nature of the relationship between them, were represented and constructed by

bureaucrats, politicians, the mass media, 'experts' of various kinds, philanthropic organisations, politically active women's groups, the churches, and organised labour. As a result, the study is largely concerned with hegemony, that is, with

> ... a variety of processes by which a fundamental group, not so much a simplistic 'ruling class' but an 'alliance of class strata', strives to achieve social, cultural and political leadership as well as economic dominance.
>
> (Reiger, 1985:23)

This study, as a consequence, says little about "the view from below" - apart from occasional correspondence in the government and organisational records and in the Letters columns of newspapers, this was not a perspective represented in the sources used. It does not look at the lived experience of the women who were the objects of these attempts at regulation. The ways in which they interpreted, used, responded to and were affected by the relations between market and non-market work and the ideological constructs surrounding them are still to be researched. In doing so, it will be necessary to look to other sources, in particular placing less reliance on written (especially published) sources and admitting as data cultural artefacts which have often been considered neither legitimate nor significant in the mainstreams of history and sociology.

WORLD WAR II: WOMEN'S PUBLIC WORK AND ITS PRIVATE LIMITATIONS

The distinction between women's "public" and "private" work is an important one, and it is only by comprehending the significance of the private work of women that one is able fully to make sense of the nature and limitations of their work in the public sphere. These limitations become particularly apparent during a period such as a major military conflict, when attempts to modify the nature of public

work (including both civil and military waged work) encounter directly the constraints related to work in the private sphere (the management of households and the bearing and rearing of children). The distinction between public and private work does not refer to the intrinsic nature of the work itself, nor is it entirely coterminous with market and non-market work. Rather, it refers to the structure of relations within which work is located. Thus, for instance, working-class women have performed many of the domestic and child-care tasks of wealthy households as market work: when performed in their own households, the same tasks are non-market work. On the other hand, the women in whose households they have been employed have been thus enabled to engage in public, but unwaged, work of various kinds - traditionally philanthropic, but during the war-time period of a more diverse nature.

What does seem clear is that, in all social classes, women are assumed, by virtue of their sex, to have the responsibility for household management and child care: whether they delegate that responsibility to paid workers has been largely a function of their class position, the extent of the social wage, and the availability of labour to undertake such work.

Australian women's market work, 1939-1945

From Australia's entry into the war in September, 1939 until the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Australian governments sought to assist the Allied war effort in Europe and the Middle East and to build up the national economy by expanding munitions production, raising armed forces, and maintaining production for civilian consumption. The strong demand for labour during this period was met by transfers between sectors of the labour market and by the absorption of large numbers of previously unemployed men and women. In this early stage of the war, women appear to have been mainly taken

up in the expansion of war-related industries and civil production, rather than replacing the male workforce to any great degree. The female workforce was also clearly the subject of categorisation relating to marital status, although by the end of the period many private employers were beginning to depart from their usual practice of not employing married women and many women were circumventing the problem by simply not revealing their married status.

From December, 1941 to late 1943 the demand for labour intensified and labour requirements and allocations were under constant review. During this period a number of issues relating to the employment of women reached a critical stage: in particular, the maintenance of distinctions between "men's" and "women's" jobs, women's pay rates, and the categorisation of female labour according to marital status and motherhood.

Women, when they came to the labour market, only remained as an undifferentiated category so long as their presence was totally resisted. Once a need for their labour was admitted, a process of differentiation began. The criteria employed in their admission were partly those of economy and efficiency (i.e. minimisation of cost and maximisation of output/profit), partly of need (usually constructed in terms of dependencies: the economic dependence of women on men, and the more global dependence of children on women). In both cases, the criteria embodied the interests and perspectives of other social groups.

In the early stages of the war, the categorisation was, in the main, limited to marital status: single women could be employed, married women could not (strictly speaking, these prescriptive statements of policy are true only for government employees: in non-government employment, policy was more variable although similar in

essence).

By early 1942, however, with the anticipation of critical labour shortages, married women were regarded as employable. The inclusion of married women in the category of employable persons raised, for the first time, considerations of the compatibility of women's "private" and "public" work: what, in effect, could be done to ensure that women's "domestic responsibilities" did not conflict with their economic activity? As the demand for labour increased, these responsibilities acquired two kinds of significance: they were seen as keeping otherwise employable women out of the work-force, and as reducing the productivity of those women who had already joined it. A number of means were employed to overcome these difficulties: propaganda campaigns were mounted, aimed at reducing absenteeism and at recruiting new labour; the introduction of part-time work was considered; schemes for domestic assistance were devised; and plans were made for the care of the children of women war workers. The category of "married women" was further broken down: firstly, according to whether the woman was responsible for the care of children, and secondly, according to the age of the children. All married women were presumed to have general responsibilities for household maintenance. Some married women were recognised as having additional responsibilities associated with child-rearing. Opinion was divided as to which of these, if any, were employable. The employment of women with pre-school aged children was contentious, and of children under two quite unacceptable.

During the final phase of the war, from the end of 1943 to September 1945, the demand for labour in the defence forces and defence production eased, although demand remained strong in the rural sector and the supply areas. In a number of respects, the female workforce was returning to something more like its pre-war

characteristics, although the numbers of women involved were still considerably higher than in 1939: 811,200, or 24.2% of the total workforce in June, 1945, compared with 677,500, or 22% of the total workforce in July, 1939. (Kramar, 1982:449).

While the workforce participation rates of single women and married women over the age of 45 continued to increase between 1943 and 1945, the participation rate of married women under 45 (those most likely to be married to members of the armed services) fell.

The change in the distribution of female labour was facilitated by the Re-establishment and Employment Bill of March, 1945, which gave automatic preference in employment to service personnel (the great majority of whom were male), and guaranteed their reinstatement in their pre-service positions wherever possible. Female service personnel (almost 50,000, or just under 7% of the total defence forces) (Kramar, 1982:452) were bombarded with advice on the one career they were now expected to follow. According to such advice:

> If we lack noble mothers we lack the first element of racial success and national greatness. Suffering and sorrow are but fires that try the gold of motherhood. We must give our life to our sons and dedicate them to God's purpose.
> (Adam-Smith, 1984:367)

The reconstruction of women's work was in process.

In examining the relationship between women's private and public work it is, finally, necessary to consider the question of voluntary work. Baldock (1983:279-293) has argued that there is a clear relationship between the sexual division of labour in the home and the maintenance of a gender-based volunteer pool of labour, which performs both economic (capital accumulation) and ideological (legitimation) functions.

The forms of voluntary work in which women engaged varied from extension and modification of their private, domestic labour (e.g. knitting, salvaging used garments and household materials) to highly public fund-raising activities, a continuation of pre-war bourgeois philanthropy overlaid with patriotic values. Almost without exception, the work fell within the boundaries of the traditional sexual division of labour - knitting, sewing, camouflage net-making, first-aid and nursing, entertainment, hospitality. The notable exception was the development, in the initial phase of the war, of women's para-military organisations, but, these were never greeted with the enthusiastic support which the more traditional areas of voluntary work received from the government.

The fact that bourgeois women participated in voluntary work to a greater extent than working class women touches on a central point in the nexus between women's public and private work. Not only could bourgeois women afford to work without wages; they could also afford the time to engage in public work because they could pay working-class women to perform the house-keeping and child-care work for which they were deemed responsible. The availability of domestic labour was, in many cases, the condition upon which voluntary work was premised, and as the supply of domestic labour declined so did the availability of bourgeois women for voluntary work.

The nexus between public and private work becomes even more complex when one considers that some of the voluntary work done by bourgeois women and made possible by the availability of working-class women as domestic servants entailed the provision of support services for women employed in war industries. This was especially true in the case of child care. Since the establishment of the first free kindergartens and day nurseries in Australia at the end of the nineteenth century, their finance and management had been the

province of bourgeois philanthropy. As the demand for women's labour intensified, especially from late 1942 onwards, the demand for child care increased, at the very time that the supply of domestic labour was in sharp decline. Yet the funding and administration of these services was almost exclusively dependent on the voluntary labour of bourgeois women, and these women's labour was in many instances premised on the availability of domestic servants. [2]

The Need for Child Care

Public expressions of opinion regarding the care of children of women war workers began around the middle of 1942 when, as we have seen, the boundaries of employability have been extended to include married women. Public meetings on the issue were held in most states during 1942, with child care committees being formed in the two most populous states, New South Wales and Voctoria. During 1943 the child care committees continued to press for adequate provision of child care facilities, looking to both state and federal governments to undertake responsibility for such provision.

While opposition to child care during the war-time period was not as public, organised or widespread as the movement in its support, there were, nonetheless, several sources and varieties of opposition. Some resonated with pre-war cultural themes, and others assumed increasing significance during the post-war period. This opposition had three main themes: a defence of the family as the basis of society, anti-communism, and bureaucratic cost-benefit analysis.

The concept of "family" which was defended was not, on the whole, subjected to close scrutiny. Its constituent elements were implied rather than explained. What <u>was</u> clear, was the pivotal role of a sexual division of labour in which the unpaid domestic labour of women was of fundamental significance. The most persistent and influential

exponent of this view of the family and the need to defend it against encroachments from both state and labour market was the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Perceived or anticipated religious opposition appears to have been a factor in the extreme caution with which the question of child care provision was approached by the Commonwealth government. In May, 1943, following newspaper reports of an experimental programme of Federal funding for child care provision, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Archbishops of Melbourne wrote to the Minister for Health expressing their opposition to the employment of women with young children. The Anglican Archbishop Booth's letter clearly expresses the concept of family which, in their view, was under attack:

> Any increased employment of mothers of children is bound to affect home life, which has played so large a part in developing our race. The mother who leaves her home for employment as a war worker must leave undone a good many of the household duties which are so valuable in preserving family life and affection. Should there be other children who are at school and a husband returning from his employment, it will be more difficult to provide the meals and comfort so essential to good relationships. In war time the need for family discipline and control is greater than ever. Some of us have seen the evidences of carelessness in this matter in the streets of our city.[3]

Archbishop Mannix (Roman Catholic) expressed a similar concern regarding the effects of married women's employment on family life, identifying the "break down of home life" as the root cause of juvenile crime, truancy, and venereal disease. He argued that children were better off in a home, any home, than in an "institution", and asked the Federal government for assurances that -

> unless a national emergency so demands, neither...creches nor any other means shall be employed which may induce mothers to cast aside their direct responsibilities in the belief that they can serve their country wore fittingly by minding a machine than by minding those children whom God has committed to their care.[4]

Although anti-communism was a more specifically post-war phenomenon, it was certaianly present during the war years and child-care was on occasions tarred with the communist brush, both directly and by implication. References to children being "drafted" into "communal centres" touch on the theme of a threat to individual freedoms. The Deputy Director of War Organisation in Industry (Brisbane), Colin Clarke, himself a prominent Roman Catholic and the father of a large family, was repeorted as calling the child care proposal's "a vicious idea propagated by communists". This was not a particularly novel charge - in 1851 the Prussian government had closed all kindergartens in Prussia because they were "breeding grounds for revolutionaries". (Cumpston & Heinig, 1944:201).

Some oposition also derived from members of the medical and educational professions, who stressed the importance of maternal care for normal chold development and the need for maternal guidance and education. And within the Commonwealth bureaucracy, the unpaid services performed by women in their homes were weighed against the cost of replacing those services (or at least some of them) if women entered the workforce.

In spite of these various forms of opposition, it became increasingly clear that many women with small children were entering the workforce. Estimates of the need for child care varied, due both to the difficulty of obtaining reliable statistics and to variations in the definition of "need" (ranging from the narrowly employment - related definitions used by the bureaucrats to the more inclusive definitions incorporating maternal and child needs used by many women's organisations). In either case, estimates of need greatly exceeded the availability of child care services.

Although both the kindergarten and day nursery (creche)* movements had their origins in late nineteenth century bourgeois philanthropy - the rescue, or rehabilitation, of the urban poor - by the late 1930's education professionals had begun to redefine kindergarten experience as universally desirable for child development, and to integrate the mother into the work of the kindergarten (it was she, as much as the child, who was to be educated). Day nurseries continued to be defined in philanthropic terms, their services stigmatised as welfare services provided for working-class families. The kindergarten movement obtained a hegemonic position in the early childhood area, defining acceptable standards of service provision and personnel.

The demand for pre-school facilities of all kinds increased during the war, due, it was thought, to a combination of factors. The employment of many women in war work has already been discussed. Other factors were thought to be the possible need to evacuate groups of children to safer areas, the strain on women left to cope with child-rearing on their own, the acute housing shortage, and the perceived importance of early childhood in later development. The voluntary organisations which had provided these services since the turn of the century, unable to provide the funds, the voluntary labour or the trained staff to cope with the increased demand, turned to governments for assistance.

Public funding for pre-school services prior to the war was very limited, and came from state governments and local councils. The powers and interest of the Commonwealth government were greatly

* In the Australian usage of these terms, the essential difference was that day nurseries provided longer hours than kindergartens and were usually for the children of employed women. Day nurseries took children from birth to school entrance age, kindergartens took children from 3 or 4 years old.

expanded in war-time, especially with regard to the labour supply, and many of the appeals for child care provision were therefore addressed to the Commonwealth.

The voluntary pre-school organisations offered their services to the Commonwealth government early in the war, and there is evidence that the possiblilty of child care provision was being canvassed within the Commonwealth bureaucracy by late 1941. In March, 1942, Constance Duncan of the Department of Labour & National Service put forward a comprehensive plan for public child care provision which represented a radical departure from the existing philanthropic pattern of provision. The proposals were opposed by the Commonwealth Director-General of Health 9although he later supported them) and the Minister for Health, who expressed a preference for the full-time employment of women with older children.

The main support within the Commonwealth bureaucracy came from the manpower authorities and the Department of Labour & National Service. Within the Department of Health different priorities prevailed, and there was considerably less enthusiasm for the child care proposals. A number of women recruited to the war-time bureaucracy showed a personal commitment to the child care issue which was not shared by their male colleagues, and their interventions played a crucial role in bringing about some action on the part of the Commonwealth. We see here the importance of recognising the relative autonomy of the state, and of avoiding the assumption that the state is a monolithic entity whose constituent parts invaribly act in concert.

The Commonwealth government reluctantly acceded to the many demands for child care provision by introducing in early 1943 an "experimental programme", in which a small number of voluntary organisations were to be given funds to expand existing services (they

were expressly forbidden from using the money to establish new services). The programme was extended several times, but always on a pro tem basis. The government thereby avoided the establishment of any administrative apparatus which might have implied a continuing commitment in the area. The particular attraction of this solution was, no doubt, that it tapped a resource of "suitable" (i.e. voluntary unpaid) female labour at minimal expense to the state, while reinforcing the appropriateness of the existing sexual division of labour. Even when the large-scale participation of women in public, market work seemed inevitable, and in spite of many rhetorical statements to the contrary, women with children were tolerated rather than encouraged in the workforce. The Minister for Health, the Cabinet Minister responsible for the programme, was very defensive about the "experiment", avoiding publicity and assuring critics that the programme was only providing for children already in need of care and was not encouraging more mothers to enter the workforce and "neglect" their children. The entire Commonwealth expenditure on the war time children's centres amounted to 40,132 pounds (compared with the $90 million spent by the United States government under the Lanham Act (Goldmintz, 1987:476)). Such decisions as were taken were half hearted and inconsistently publicised, and there seems always to have been considerable ambivalance about both the desirabilty and the objectives of the programme. The amount of money allocated to it was derisory, and the amount actually expended even more meagre.

On Christams Eve, 1945, the voluntary organisations were informed that the goverment's "experiment" in child care was at an end. The concepts of women as labour market participants and as mother intersected at the level of public policy, but only briefly, and it would seem that labour needs were never so critical that the "private matter" of child care was transformed into a public issue.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AND COLD WAR

To most Australians post-war reconstruction probably meant the demobilisation of members of the armed services, the re-establishment of munitions workers, and a measure of social reform in post-war society. To those engaged in reconstruction planning, the project was ambiguous: was there to be a return to "normality", or the beginning of a project of social transformation?

'Post-war reconstruction', as the term is being used here, has two meanings. It refers both to an historical period, generally regarded as covering the years between 1942 and 1948, and to a body of ideas associated with the specific historical tranformations of the 1930's and 1940's. Reconstructionism was a compound of popular memories and fear of the aftermath of World War 1, the ensuing economic depression and the growth of fascism, and an expressed determination to avoid a return to these conditions at the war's end. The influence of Keynesian economic theory and the example of government intervention in the labour market afforded by the United States experience of the New Deal led to the belief, amongst some economists and politicians at least, that it was now possible to avoid these conditions through economic and social planning.

The intellectual bases of reconstructionism were not, however, exclusivley economic. European intellectuals had been concerned to develop an understanding of the political and social changes occuring in Europe during the 1930's, in particular the growth of fascism, and to expose the relations between changes in the social and political structure and in human behaviour and personality structure.

These were the themes which were to be picked up in most Australian articulations of reconstruction policy: full employment, rising living standards, social security, resource development, and

population increase (the latter two themes sometimes subsumed under the heading of 'national security').

The objectives of reconstruction were social objectives which could be achieved only through collective action. Where necessary, the actions of individuals had to be prevented from cutting across these plans, and the balance between individual freedom and state control became the ideological pivot on which hung the struggle over the nature of the post-war world. The picture of post-war freedom (and domestic insularity) is nicely encapsulated in an extract from the Economist:

> After four years and a bit of war, the citizen and taxpayer is more than a little tired of restrictions. Very humanly, he wants to cultivate his garden, without digging for anybody's victory except his own. He wants to believe that all his journeys are necessary; and he wants to find his wife and daughters, however "mobile", at home when he returns from his very non-essential work.
>
> (Quoted in Campbell, 1944:140)

Human nature, in this representation, is equated with the primacy of the individual: the basic concept of liberalism is "naturalised". And the "citizen" and "taxpayer" is most definitely male.

As the prospect of invasion and defeat faded, the salience of a united vision of a better post-war world lessened, and different priorities began to be more vigorously asserted. Business demands for freedom from the restriction of government controls increased, and attractive pictures of individual freedom were contrasted with the dreariness and drudgery of war-time controls (as in the example quoted above). In 1944 a referendum to extend the Constitutional powers of the Commonwealth (believed to be an essential step in post-war reconstruction) was lost.

The war ended, with the Labour and conservative parties struggling over competing visions of the New Order. For Labor, the emphasis was on individual restraint to facilitate collective

development - an extension of the social wage. The conservative parties, on the other hand, identified long-term prospects of progress with short term liberation from war-time controls and the production of consumer goods:

> A few voices protested that a standard of consumption is not the same thing as a standard of living, and that Australia needed health services, educational facilities, community centres, youth welfare work, and cultural development more urgently than additional automobiles and radios. Others stressed the need for raising the housing and other material consumption standards of the low-income groups, before multiplying or refining the physical conforts of the middle classes... But most Australians would endorse, without qualification, the view that 'the major challenge for democratic statesman and administrators after the war will be that of maximising material wealth without jeopardising human liberties'.
>
> (Cottle, 1982:272)

The Role of Women in Reconstruction

With the exception of a small number of recent analyses, accounts of post-war reconstruction in Australia have been largely ungendered, and have dealt almost exclusively with a "public" and male world. This is as true of modern writing on the period as it was of contemporary accounts of reconstruction. But was reconstruction exclusively the product of male minds, and did it effect men and women in the same ways? Were the visions of the New Order entirely ungendered, or were gender divisions so taken for granted that they were "naturalised" and rendered invisible?

The war-time threat of invasion revived old fears in the Australian population, leading to the equation of population increase with national security, and its inclusion among the objectives of post-war reconstruction:

> We are 7,000,000 white people in the midst of the most crowded area of the world and far from the large centres of white population.[7]

It seems to have been fairly generally accepted that it would not be possible to rely on "natural increase" alone, and from 1947 the Labor government pursued a vigorous programme of assisted immigration. Nonetheless, "natural increase" was the preferred method of population expansion, and in 1944 the National Health and Medical Research Council was directed to enquire into the decline in the birth-rate. Insofar as attention was paid to the conditions of Australian women's lives in planning for post-war reconstruction, such considerations were in most cases explicitly tied to a pro-natalist objective.

Cass (1982) argues that the "family", rather than the individual, was constituted as the legitimate recipient of the rewards of the post-war reconstruction state, and that within the parameters of Keynesian thought it was not too difficult to conceive of the state as supplying a supportive infrastructure for expanded fertility. Women's unpaid domestic labour, she suggests, was assumed as the basis of full-employment, population and welfare policies. Certainly, the movements for improved housing and working conditions for the housewife were at least in part linked to the affirmation of a limited and prescriptive definition of the family as the cornerstone of reconstructed society.

MERE HEWERS OF CAKE AND DRAWERS OF RAFFLE TICKETS?
THE POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S WORK

By the end of the war, a number of significant changes had taken place in the workforce participation of Australian women. A greater proportion of women (especially married women) were participants in the paid labour force; women now occupied a more diverse range of positions in the labour force, including some traditionally male areas of employment; and the Women's Employment Board had made a significant

impact on the wage rates and working conditions of a considerable number of women workers. It was not long, however, before each of these changes came under attack.

The workforce participation of Australian women during the period under consideration peaked during 1943, had begun to decline by 1945, and reached its lowest level by 1947, after which it began to recover. It is estimated that between 1945 and 1947 around 60,000 Australian women left the paid workforce. The largest long-term changes occurred among married women whose workforce participation rates never returned to their pre-war levels. In 1933 married women constituted only 11.09% of the female workforce: by 1943 this had increased to 24.05%, and at the lowest point, in 1947, the figure had been reduced to 19.5% (Kramar, 1982:458).

After a sharp drop in the immediate post-war years, increasing numbers of married women entered employment in the late 1940's. By 1954 the number of married women in Australia had increased by 29% since the war; the increase in the number of employed married women over the same period was 52% (Faro, 1983:39).

The sharp decline in the workforce participation of women (especially married women) in the immediate post-war period from 1945 to 1947 raises an obvious question: did they jump, or were they pushed? Certainly the passage of the Commonwealth Re-establishment & Employment Bill in March, 1945, which gave automatic preference in employment to ex-service personnel over the next seven years, was a major government intervention disadvantaging those women who had joined the workforce, both in war industries and in traditionally male areas of employment, during the war. The Bill was, quite simply, the concluding phase of the policy relating to women's employment which had been espoused by the government since early in the war.

An important distinction was made in official discourse between

war service (predominantly male - almost 1,000,000 men were enlisted during the course of the war, compared with 66,000 women) and war work, with the interests of war workers always subordinate to those of war service personnel. In most government reports on post-war labour supplies it was assumed that large numbers of women, especially married women, would withdraw from paid labour at the conclusion of the war, and that such women as remained would be in traditional areas of female employment. Post-war reconstruction full employment policies were based on the employment of those who "wanted" to work, with no consideration given to the social construction of the "want" in question.

The widely read Australian Women's Weekly clearly articulated a similar view of women's post-war work, also managing to suggest that women who did not conform to it were depriving soldiers of their livelihood:

> All patriotic women who are now holding down soldiers' jobs in factory or field or office, who do not need their wages for self-support, or the support of dependents, will return to their most essential peacetime job: the resolidifying, expansion and strengthening of the family unit. They will go back to their homes and their families - their real jobs - with a new vision and a new purpose: to raise and educate more and better citizens.
>
> [Emphasis mine] (Quoted in Faro, 1983:86)

There was a reassertion from many sources of a traditional, sexually differentiated division of labour, and in the post-war period concern with women's working conditions turned from market work to focus increasingly on the spheres of housework and, especially, motherhood.

The Unpaid Work of Women

The post-war reassertion of a traditional division of labour, both within the sphere of paid labour and between paid and unpaid

labour, came from many sources - government policy, trade union attitudes, demobilisation services, and popular representations in the mass media. As well, the bulk of the energies of the women's organisations seemed increasingly to be turned to obtaining improvements in working conditions in the domestic sphere, with little attention (other than over the issue of equal pay) to the question of women's participation in paid employment.

The 1940's was a period in which the role of the Australian state in the lives of its citizens increased dramatically. Government policy during this period reasserted and strengthened traditional concepts of womanhood by keeping women's wages lower than those of men, by regulating women's employment out of non-traditional areas of work, and through social service provisions which operated so as to work against women in paid employment and those who wished to join the workforce. From around 1947, with the development of the Cold War, trade union attitudes towards women's employment appear to have become generally more reactionary.

At the level of popular representation in the mass media, the theme of women's war service experience as good training for marriage was emphasised, and as the post-war period progressed the role of women as moral guardians against the cultural threat of Communism was increasingly stressed.

The concentration of many women's organisations on improving the working conditions of housewives was in some respects a continuation and amplification of war-time concerns, when the emphasis was on the difficulties for women coping with families alone, war-time shortages, the lack of domestic help, and restrictions on "non-essential" services such as food deliveries. In the post-war period, however, these matters were emphasised to the virtual exclusion of any concern with the lives and working conditions of women in paid employment.

Various solutions to the problem of women's domestic burden were envisaged, ranging from those based on providing assistance to individual women in the performance of home-based domestic labour, to a more equal sharing of the burden with men, to communal provision of services traditionally performed by women at home for the members of their own family. Touching, as they did, on some of the core concepts of post-war reconstruction and the Cold War (community, individualism, privacy, etc.), these proposals were inevitably caught in the ideological nets of the late 1940's.

The concepts of community and communal provision, so central to reconstruction philosophy in general, came under increasing attack as inimical to Cold War values of privacy, individual responsibility and the primacy of the family as a social unit:

> As for community nurseries and laundries, a woman feels jealous of anyone else's baby-care of her particular child, of anyone else's cooking or washing; also she knows in her heart that an open fire warms the family affections and gives more real happiness than central heating.
>
> And as for community laundries exposing her belongings, a good housewife rather prides herself on her washing, and does not mind the neighbours admiring it on her line; but for a fastidious woman to be obliged to put her underwear and table and bed linen in a copper and tubs with or after that of some dirty family is revolting.
>
> ... and finally, every decent woman likes privacy. To be obliged to make her home a community affair offends her feelings in every way.[8]

There was, however, fairly widespread recognition that women's wartime experience of out-of-home work had resulted in a certain amount of dissatisfaction with the traditional occupations of motherhood and housework. The problems of the traditional role were seen as twofold - economic dependence and social isolation. Very few speakers and writers on the subject saw the solution to these problems as being in paid employment. Rather, economic dependence could be

overcome by the payment of "wages for housework", and social isolation by community (i.e. unpaid) work.

The concept of a "career" for women, a significant theme in feminist discourse, was reconstructed during the post-war period to emphasise, in particular, the uniqueness of women's contribution to child-rearing and the "scientific" underpinning of motherhood as the career for women:

> Women have shown that they can do almost any man's work, possibly as well, but very rarely better, than a man does it, while men, on the other hand, can do almost any woman's work and do it better than a woman does. ...
> But there remains one enormous field of work into which men cannot and dare not penetrate - the care of young children. Women have never grasped fully the significance of this vital fact. On the training and direction received during the pre-school years depends the whole of the child's future development, and this still remains a woman's realm.
>
> The care of babies and pre-school children ... should provide all the creative work women need.
>
> (Greenshields, 1946:12)

Furthermore, the argument that this career could not successfully be combined with any other was comprehensively incorporated into the theory and practice of professionals who increasingly intervened in the construction of "proper" family relations. An example is this 1952 article on working mothers and the family, which appeared in an Australian social worker's journal:

> When young mothers continue to work after the birth of their children many situations may arise which will hinder the normal growth and development towards emotional maturity of the children and will threaten the stability of the family group despite the extra material comforts which may be provided because of greater economic security...
>
> Does the working mother threaten the sense of permanency of the home which the growing child needs? Has the working mother the energy left after her hours of work to provide the atmosphere of security for her children of this age group [Frued's latent period]? ...
>
> If an adolescent's mother is no longer the feminine person of tradition but the working mother whose interests and energies are largely outside the home, is he provided with

> that salve for spiritual wounds of adolescence which is summed up by the nostalgic song "There's no place like Home"?
>
> (Davis, 1952:22-25)

Women's employment could also have serious effects on the physical and mental health of men:

> What of the changing role of the father? In our culture dependency is a quality which has been linked with femininity and many men who have been influenced by this tradition need to care for and to protect their wives in order to satisfy their feelings of adequacy ...
> ... An ... example of the threat to the male's traditional role was with an asthmatic client who had a long history of broken employment with consequent marital disharmony. He decided after much conflict to consent to a three month's convalescent period away from his wife. During this time she decided to work and continued to work on his return home. The client's condition has greatly deteriorated and only improved on the wife's consenting to give up her job.
>
> (Davis, 1952:26-27)

Why, and in what circumstances, we might ask, had motherhood become so important in defining women's work in the post-war period?

POST-WAR PRONATALISM AND POPULATION POLICY

In essence, the process of redefinition took place in a context of pro-natalism, with concern about population policy a central element in reconstruction planning. Population policy brought together the spheres of the domestic division of labour, labour market policy and foreign policy within a framework of Keynesian economics and social democratic policies.

The question of the size (and, to a lesser extent, the quality) of the European ("white") population had exercised the Australian state (and the imperial system in general), throughout the course of the twentieth century, following the decline in the birth-rate associated with the economic depression of the 1890's. Most twentieth century population analysts accepted the premise that mortality rates had been reduced almost to their feasible limits and that further

increases in population would be brought about either by "natural" increase (births to resident women) or by means of immigration. Which of these means was favoured seems to have varied throughout the course of the century.

What were the reasons behind Australian concern over the declining rate of population increase? Undoubtedly, a major factor was fear that, with a small population and no "moral" hold on the continent, Australians would be unable to resist the claims of expansionist states. Clearly, pre-war Japanese expansionism and the events of World War II fuelled these fears. Tied in with the defence question was an eugenicist strand of concern for racial purity, with frequent references in the discourse on population to the decline of the white races, race suicide, and similar concepts.

Other reasons, too, were adduced for concern about the decline in population growth. Economists worried about the effects of a stable or declining population on an economic system wedded to the concept of growth through expanding markets, and about the economic and social policy consequences of an ageing population structure. Other arguments put forward included the exercise of greater influence in world affairs, more efficient utilisation of public utilities and exploitation of natural resources, and greater cultural development.

There was, then, an almost universal acceptance of the existence of a population problem in Australia, although there were different views on the causes of the problem and on the means of its resolution. There was, as Riley (1983:155) has observed of Great Britain, pronatalism on both right and left of the political spectrum, and feminists seem also to have accepted that it was the "duty" of women to increase the Australian population (albeit in circumstances which minimised their dependence and drudgery, and enhanced the status of motherhood). A plethora of policy questions were presented for

discussion. Should the aim of population policy be population increase, or simply the prevention of population decline? Should the emphasis of such policy be on "natural increase" or on immigration? Was a change in attitudes needed, or a change in material conditions? Should emphasis be placed on repressive measures, or inducements, or on facilitating choices voluntarily taken? Should assistance be in the form of cash allowances, or services and facilities?

Throughout the discussion of population policy two strands were interwined: the emphasis on the (nuclear) family as the central unit of social analysis, and the presumption that fertility rates are the products of decisions by individual women. Women, in the discourse on population policy, were placed firmly within the family, which in turn was considered as a unitary entity whose members shared a single set of needs and interests.

The two strands in population policy led to advocacy for a dual approach. Policies were formulated on the one hand to mitigate the impact (especially the economic impact) of child-rearing on families, and on the other hand to make motherhood more attractive to women. What they did not do was to hold up for critical examination the role of women within the family - the aim was "more, as before, only easier". A few sops were thrown in the direction of women - the inclusion of "women's issues" on the agenda of community post-war discussion groups, planned improvements in housing conditions, a small sum of money for emergency domestic assistance schemes - but the sexual division of labour inside and outside the domestic sphere was unchallenged.

Pro-natalism was also, as we have seen, the context within which women's "career" was defined as motherhood, and attempts were made to improve their working conditions. From the perspective of the

population policy-makers, the objective of these measures was to make maternity more attractive to women. From the perspective of many women's and feminist organisations, the aim was to improve women's lot by increasing the status of motherhood and relieving the burdens of maternity. In many respects, these objectives fused around a common set of measures enshrining the reproductive woman at the heart of social policy.

One theme in the recommendations made was to improve women's experience of pregnancy and childbirth (and also, it must be added, to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity). The major emphasis, though, was on means by which the work of child-rearing could be improved. The provision of creches, nurseries and kindergartens was explicitly linked by many writers to pronatalist objectives. A few made the connection with women's workforce participation, but most emphasised child care as a form of relief for full-time mothers:

> Post-natal rest homes or help in the home, together with adequate creches, could give [the mother] the relief needed if she is to escape physical and mental exhaustion. Experience has proved that expertly-run creches and nursery schools are of enormous benefit to the child and the mother, who then has an opportunity for shopping or relaxation, and a chance to make an intelligent contribution to the affairs of the community or State.[9]

Even femanist writers, it seemed, emphasised this connection:

> The answer, to my mind, is simple - CRECHES - government-sponsored, government-run, clean, healthy creches where we may <u>sometimes</u> leave our babies, knowing they are being well cared for, while we go on our way gathering stimulation from our contacts with our free fellows. Then watch the birthrate increase...[My emphasis.]
>
> (de Coney, 1945:31)

A sad postscript to these debates and discussions can be found in a 1953 collection on the Australian way of life:

> The provision of these services [child endowment, maternity grants, hospital and medical subsidies, clinics], liberal as they are, does not mean that Australia has a 'family policy' in the sense of, say, France or Sweden. Indeed, social theory in Australia (where it has been in evidence) has tended to militate against the extension of communal services for the family. The State's responsibility, the argument has run, is to ensure that every family has the guarantee of an adequate flow of wages, by means of the basic wage and child endowment, and to ensure that every child has the opportunity for an adequate education. For the rest, the raising of children is essentially a family and not a community matter.
>
> (Borrie, 1953:37)

The family, it seemed, had remained something entirely personal and private - at least as far as the work of child-rearing was concerned.

Feminist writers have often suggested (see introduction) that, faced with a war-time need for labour which could only be met by women, the Australian government was quick to provide the child care facilities to make such labour available, and equally quick at the end of the war to withdraw support for such care when women's labour was no longer required. The ideological trappings under which the withdrawal took place, it is said, were those of Bowlbyism - child care had been "discovered" to be bad for children.

In fact, as we have seen, the Commonwealth government was not quick to respond to calls for child care provision. It showed considerable reluctance to become involved in the area at all, in large part because of the social conservatisn of the Roman Catholic church which strongly influenced both the party membership of the A.L.P. and its working-class constituency, and because of the reservations of the trade union movement concerning any extension in the employment of women and the erection of any social infrastructure to support this extension. When it did become involved, the Commonwealth's participation was of a very limited kind. By working through the existing voluntary agencies it avoided the establishment

of any bureaucratic apparatus which might be difficult to dismantle. In these circumstances, disengagement was swift and (somewhat more surprising, given the amount of lobbying which had preceded the Commonwealth Government's initial involvement) relatively uncontested. Services for pre-school children did undergo considerable restructuring during the post-war years (both material and ideological), in concert with the recasting of women's role in post-war reconstruction, especially in the context of widespread pronatalism. To invoke Bowlbyism as the ideological underpinning of this reconstruction, however, is historically inaccurate. Bowlby's work became influential among the paediatric and kindergarten professions in Australia during the 1950's, but the ingredients of the post-war reconstructuring of child care derived from other sources.

The terms within which child-care was discussed in the post-war period were increasingly conservative. Little was said, even by feminist organisations, about women's work outside the home. Child-care was increasingly defined in relation to women's work within the home. Sometimes, child-care for employed women was dismissed as undesirable and/or necessary. Mostly, it simply went unmentioned in discussions of the need for pre-school services. As employment-related child care needs receded into near-oblivion, day nurseries and creches seemed once again to be regarded as "inferior" services, outside of the mainstream of pre-school provision and for "problem" children.

Even writers who acknowledged that women might <u>choose</u> employment over unpaid domestic labour, and as a consequence need child care, problematised the situation:

> A large percentage of women are psychologically quite unfitted to be average housewives. Homemaking is a magnificent asset to the State and a domesticated woman may well be the glory of womanhood, but square pegs cannot be put into round vocational holes...

> The working mother has come to stay. She is not a temporary product of war. While husbands die and women exist who prefer the factory to the full time home environment, there child must be given every opportunity for a well adjusted life. Kindergartens, creches and community facilities are, therefore necessary.
>
> (Bostock & Hill, 1946:52-53)

This raises the question of whether, as has frequently been claimed, theories of maternal deprivation were utilised by the state in its withdrawal from involvement in child care provision. During the war, there had been frequent expressions of concern by magistrates, police, medical officers, psychologists and educationalists over juvenile delinquency as a consequence of "broken homes". But this concern was directed more at school age children, and was attributed as much to parental absence as to maternal employment or simply to an overburdened home-based mother. Furthermore, it was often mobilised as an argument in support of child care provision. The lack of enthusiasm demonstrated by the Commonwealth government in its tardy and inadequate response to calls for war-time child care provision was attributable more to its reluctance to offend either the labour movement or the Roman Catholic church. The labour movement was sensitive to any possible undermining of the privileged status of male labour. The Roman Catholic church (whose members made up a significant proportion both of the membership of the Australian Labor Party and of its constituency) opposed any policy which might undermine the sexual division of labour within the family, which the church so strenuously defended, or which might open up the years of early childhood to secular influences. The speed with which the Commonwealth withdrew from its involvement in child care provision was a product of its limited commitment, and of the limited extent of opposition to its withdrawal. In the redrawn agenda of the postwar period, there was considerable enthusiasm for kindergartens and nursery schools, but little interest in the day nurseries and

creches. Psychological constructs of maternal necessity were not significant factors in the termination of funding for child care provision. They were, however, important in the reconstruction of pre-school services which occurred during the post-war period.

We begin to see, in this period, the re-casting of the mother as central to the psychological development of the child, of the mother's "work" as the production of her child, and an equation of the mother-child relationship with "family life". It is interesting to note here Helterline's (1980:594) observation that, although the concept of psychological development had been present in academic psychology since the beginning of the century, Freud's theory had emphasised the role of the father and it was not until the late 1930's and 1940's that the post-Freudians began to emphasise the pre-Oedipal mother.

At the 1947 conference of the Australian Association for Pre-School Child Development, many speakers addressed themselves to the mother-child relationship:

> The most significant factor in the child's development is its relationship to its mother, whose intimate association with the child during its early years forms the basis of an attachment which should endure throughout its life. Her knowledge of the individual needs of each of her children places her in the most privileged position to control, as far as possible, the early social environment in which the child's habits are gradually formulated into an established pattern.
>
> ... Deprivation of maternal love has been cited by most psychiatrists as the chief cause of nervous breakdowns in children, and mental breakdowns in adults.

The sting in the tail of the message, though, was that mothers, while important, should not be powerful:

> Many sociologists are of the opinion that the outstanding characteristics of social change in the family are a

> deterioration in the prestige of the father, and an improvement in the status of the mother. Some even warn us of early signs of a developing matriarchy.
>
> (AAPSCD, 1947:89,133,87)

In the immediate post-war years, as we have seen, the mother's need for relief from work of child-rearing was widely argued. By the end of the 1940's the child's psychological needs had moved into centre stage, and little was heard of the needs of the mother. It is interesting to consider this growing preoccupation with the child in the context of Cold War politics for, as Ehrenreich and English have suggested:

> The idea that the child was the key to the future ... had a definite political message ... by concentrating on the child - rather than on, say, political agitation, union organising, or other hasty alternatives - the just society would be achieved painlessly, but slowly.
>
> (Ehrenreich and English, quoted in Moroney, 1985:49)

The imagery of home and family and the sexual division of labour constituted a significant theme in the struggle over the nature of the post-war world, in which the balance between individual "freedom" and state "control" become the central ideological pivot.

Proponents of pre-school services, almost without exception, prefaced their support with the observation that such services as they had in mind reinforced, rather than undermined, "the family". By this they meant one particular family form, the bourgeois family with its bread-winning father and dependent mother. The dominance of this construct of the family was such that even those who worked in and for the day nurseries legitimated their work in terms of "keeping the family together", i.e., approximating as closely as possible to the "normal" family in "abnormal" circumstances.

Implicit in much of what has been said in this paper is a tension between ideology of the private family and the reality of state regulation of domestic life. A good example of this tension can be

found in the words of a speaker at the 1947 conference of the Australian Association for Pre School Child Development:

> Another quite real danger is the profound sociological drift characteristic of the 20th century and not confined to any one particular brand of political thought, which attacks the home as the bulwark of the liberty of the individual citizen. It is constantly being invaded by the State and other social groups to relieve parents of the responsibility of educating, feeding, maintaining and doctoring their child. And, though this valuable work is in many cases necessary and acceptable - because some home influence is bad or indifferent or just non-existent - there is an increasing danger to the whole community of a severe loss of unity, direction and personal freedom of the family.
>
> (AAPSCD, 1947:38)

"Expert" intervention into the internal dynamics of the family, which had begun earlier in the century with the infant welfare movement, was continued and extended beyond its working-class origins via the kindergartens and nursery schools. This expansion encountered some resistance, based on liberal individualism and the old bourgeois philanthropic view of the family as a private haven of domestic insularity, whose boundaries could be breached only in problematic (i.e. working-class) instances. Much of this resistance was couched in terms of opposition to "state" intervention in family life. In this context, "state" was synonymous with "government": in its broader, more sociological meaning the state had, of course, been intervening in working class life throughout the entire period of the philanthropic groups' existence. What was really at issue was a struggle over hegemony between the old bourgeoisie and the new technocratic professional class fraction.

The story of Australian women's market and non-market work during World War II and the early post-war years is more complex than would be suggested by simple reserve army of labour explanations. Certainly, at no point did the state exhibit enthusiasm for

incorporating mothers into the paid workforce - government, church, bureaucracy and labour movement resisted maternal employment wherever possible. Beechey (1983:42) has suggested that it is important to distinguish between familial ideology, which asserts that a women's primary responsibilities are those of housewife and mother, and the concrete constraints which caring for children impose upon certain women. With the exception of a small number of women within the bureaucracy whose concern was with the concrete constraints of child-rearing, familial ideology dominated the actions and rhetoric of these groups. Patriarchal concepts of women's nature and place remained intact throughout the period, and capital's immediate need for labour often rubbed against this grain. When labour shortages were experienced from 1947 onwards, any straightforward resolution by means of more extensive employment of women was complicated by the development of Cold War consumption-oriented policies overlaid on familial ideology.

Braydon (1981), discussing Great Britain during World War I, has made the point that familial ideology was largely accepted and actively supported by the organised labour movement and by working-class men, who gained advantages from their gender only because they chose to support the sexual division of labour even though this was economically damaging to them as a class (by maintaining an economically divided working class). Milkman (1982) demonstrates that, as in the Australian case, United States employers in World War II were initially resistant to the employment of women for war work and did so only when the supply of male labour had been exhausted. She points out that the boundaries between "men's" and "women's" jobs were not eliminated in this mobilisation, but rather that their location was shifted. Milkman argues that although it appears quite irrational for individual employers to differentiate rigidly between

male and (cheaper) female workers, familial ideology and the job segregation it legitimates serve the general class interests of capital by fostering political disunity, securing the reproduction of labour, and constituting women as a source of cheap labour. What is more difficult to understand is the apparent domination of working-class men's gender interest over their class interest in shaping their relationship to the sexual division of labour. It is important to explain this with reference to specific historical circumstances, and not simply to presume from the outset that it is inevitable or "given". In the present study, it has become clear that the manner in which history and biography intersect in society could not be understood without reference to the organising principles of both class and gender, and particularly to their (contradictory and reinforcing) interconnectedness. Without them, no understanding of women's market and non-market work, of the connections between the "public" and "private" spheres, and of the role of the state in regulating this relationship, would be complete.

NOTES

1. Breughel (1979, cited in Beechey, 1983) has argued that this is a distortion of Marx's original thesis, which was developed to show how the expansion of capitalism inevitably drew more and more people into a labour reserve.

2. The supply of voluntary labour for child care services also suffered through having to compete with other forms of "war work" for the support of bourgeois women.

3. Australian Archives: Dept. of the Treasury, CRS A571. Correspondence files, 1901-1976. "War-time children's centres". 1942-1944. 43/550.

4. Ibid.

5. Courier Mail, 17/2/43.

6. It is interesting to note that Riley (1983:116) has discovered similar conflicts between the Ministers of Health and Labour in the war-time United Kingdom.

7. N.S.W. Reconstruction Advisory Committee Bulletin, October, 1943, p.22.

8. Sydney Morning Herald, 24/5/45, p.2.

9. Sydney Morning Herald, 18/4/44, p.2.

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